

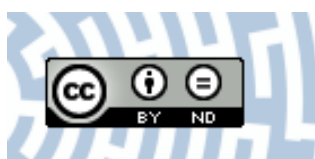


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Jolanta Suchodolska

Polish students' attitudes and expectations concerning the process of European integration

"Defining what we together need to do and the way we have to organise is the key to future. Thus, European issue needs to be regarded as primarily important. Europe should become our major support and the frame of our action. Nevertheless, the issue is so important because Europe is as it really is, and not as it should be [...]"

Paul Thibaud

Europe¹ seems to be heading for integration² at pace and in scope which has not been observed so far. The idea of uniting European nations dates back to the remote past. There are a number of opinions concerning the origin of the idea³. There has begun a conflict between the attempts promoting unity and uniformity, and the attempts aiming at its division and diversification⁴.

¹ Europe is a notion which came into existence as early as in ancient times, in the astrological and geographical work called "Tetrabiblion" by Ptolemy; K. Pomian, E. Shils, and C. Taylor: *Europa i co z tego wynika. Rozmowy z Castel Gandolfo*. Vol. 2, fragments of a discussion. Warszawa 1985, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, p. 134; R. Buttiglione and J. Merecki: *Europa jako pojęcie filozoficzne*. Lublin 1996, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, pp. 29—38.

² Unification — integration. According to Lalande, integration means "tightening of the mutual dependency of parts of a living organism or of society members". Therefore, integration is a process which unifies a society and leads to its transformation into a structure functioning harmoniously. Elimination of conflicts and formation of solidarity are believed to evolve. *Słownik filozoficzny* by Lalande, quoted after M. Duverger: *The Idea of Politics. The Uses of Power in Society*. London 1964, (the name of publisher is missing), pp. 163—172; J. Habermas distinguishes between an integration of system and of politics. Cf. J. Habermas: *Obywatelstwo a tożsamość społeczna narodów. Rozważania nad przyszłością Europy*. Warszawa 1993, Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk, p. 48.

³ K. Pomian presents some arguments for the idea that a germ of the concept of the unity of Europe dates back to the reign of the dynasty of the Carolingians. Cf. K. Pomian: *Europa i jej narody*. Warszawa 1992, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy. According to J.M. Domenach this concept does not derive from Carol the Great, but from European nihilism. He claims that the dream about the unity was born during the occupation, first in the resistance movement, then in Algiers, and finally in Paris and Bonn. "It is a fruit of utopia, but of the one which is real, since it assumes two warring sides to be unified by a web of such mutual commercial structures; later on they will contribute to the birth of new needs, customs and emotions." Cf. J. M. Domenach: *Europa: wyzwanie dla kultury*. Warszawa 1992, Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza, p. 16.

⁴ M. S. Szymański: *Tożsamość kulturowa młodych Polaków a zjednoczenie Europy*. "Dziecko i Edukacja" 1993, No 2, p. 37. M. Duverger claims that conflict and integration are inseparably connected. It is not always possible to distinguish between the two, since controversies within a given

At present, a number of nations have put a considerable effort in reshaping Europe, to make "it reborn as a new one"⁵, culturally, economically and politically⁶. The issues to be solved concern European citizenship, as well as future European frontiers and the price that needs to be paid for a new reality. It is vital for Europe, composed of numerous nations and communities cultivating different traditions⁷, to be united not only in terms of new social and economic enterprises, but also on the basis of spiritual values, without which integration is bound to fail. Christian communities call for appropriately understood freedom-entailing observance of human rights⁸, and they encourage people to tolerant behaviour⁹. The New European Constitution seems to promise a happier life, a life characterised by amiability, dignity, environmental awareness and civil virtues¹⁰. The expectations have become a debatable public issue.

The attitude of society to European integration has become crucial, especially in the situations when the expectations of a society are great, but one can presume that a considerable part of the society will be reluctant to support the attempts of cultural unification of nations¹¹. Therefore, the research of the domain focuses mainly on examining opinions concerning integration as well as attitudes¹² concerning the very process.

The author of the paper considered two factors when examining the pro-European attitudes of students of the Polish-Czech transfrontier region:

- students are the core of future society and are going to be both creators and users of future European achievements, and thus, they are a particularly significant sample of the society. University education contributes

political system are both a form of clash and integration. Cf. M. Duverger, op. cit., pp. 163—172. According to Lalande integration of a society requires elimination of these conflicts which divide the society, whereas a society which is free from conflicts cannot be regarded as truly integrated. Cf. *Słownik filozoficzny* by Lalande, quoted after M. Duverger, op. cit., pp. 163—172.

⁵ J. M. Domenach, op. cit., p. 5.

⁶ At present, Polish political elite has great interest in this process; its members wish Poland to enter European Community quickly.

⁷ J. M. Domenach, op. cit., p. 31; W. Misiak: *Europa regionalna. Procesy automatyzacji i integracji*. Wrocław 1995, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, pp. 25, 27.

⁸ M. Filipiak, C. Ritter: *Jan Paweł II na temat Europy. Bibliografia odnotowana wypowiedzi: 1978—1995, Ku jednej zjednoczonej Europie (Do Prezydenta, Wiedeń 23.VI). OR pol. 9.' (1988) 7: 20—21 (in:)* R. Buttiglione and J. Merecki, op. cit., p. 209.

⁹ John Paul II calls nations to reject ideology of violence, fanatical nationalism and intolerance. *Budujcie Europę nadziei, wierną własnym korzeniom*. (A speech given during the night vigil, Loreto, Sept. 9th), OR pol. 16.' (1995), pp. 11—12, 34—36 (in:) R. Buttiglione and J. Merecki, op. cit., p. 210.

¹⁰ A. Heller: *Podzwonne dla Europy?* (in:) A. Heller and F. Feher: *The Postmodern Political Condition*. Cambridge and Oxford 1988 (quoted after "Nowa Res Publica" 1993, No 9, p. 10).

¹¹ The scheme of cultural integration process was discussed by W. Decyk and S. Dubisz: *Zmiany polskich antropimów w zbiorowościach polonijnych a procesy integracji kulturowej*. "Przegląd Humanistyczny" 1995, No 2, pp. 115—116.

¹² S. Nowak: *Pojęcie postaw w teoriach i stosowanych warunkach społecznych*. (in:) S. Nowak: *Teorie postaw*. Warszawa 1973, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, p. 73.

to the importance of the students' attitudes and opinions concerning the model of Europe;

- a considerable number of students come from different regions of Poland, and this may differentiate their opinions and attitudes towards integration from the ones characteristic of the students from the Cieszyn area¹³. Moreover, students from other parts of Poland — as the results of the analysis show — declare local patriotism¹⁴.

It should be mentioned that attitudes of the young people towards the idea of integrated Europe may be conditioned by such factors as openness to the world, interest in the process of integration, individual experience, general knowledge, and intellectual development¹⁵.

Both students' attitudes towards integration and their expectations of life in united Europe shall be taken into consideration in the analysis.

It is assumed that open-minded people tend to accept the idea of Europe without borders, and they are ready to be a part of multicultural communities. Nevertheless, people who are more locally oriented often tend to be afraid of other people's domination, and, consequently, they are not inclined to accept the concept of open borders and the idea of formation of multicultural communities.

The author will analyse the following issues:

- I Young people's acceptance of the concept of united Europe.
- II Young people's expectations and hopes concerning European integration;
 - united Europe and its influence on individuals;
 - possibilities of self-fulfilment at work;
 - new values united Europe is to promote;

¹³ The term *students living in the area of Cieszyn* refers to students who come from Cieszyn Silesia — the region in the south of Poland in the southern part of Górny Śląsk. These are young people from cultural transfrontier region. Cf. R. Kantor: *Kultura pogranicza jako problem etnograficzny*. (in:) Z. Jasiński and T. Korbel (eds): *Zderzenia i przenikanie kultur na pograniczach*. Opole 1988, Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna, p. 55. Transfrontier region is sometimes referred to in a context of psychological condition of a human existing within a specific area (cultural or regional transfrontier region, tradition, etc.). Cf. A. Kłoskowska: *Stereotypy a rzeczywistość narodowej identyfikacji i przyswojenia kultury*. "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 1993, No 4, pp. 41—42.

¹⁴ The results of the research on this issue done by and according to Społeczny Zespół Badań Kultury i Oświaty Pogranicza supervised by T. Lewowicki were published in the following: T. Lewowicki (ed.): *Poczucie tożsamości narodowej młodzieży*. Cieszyn 1994, Uniwersytet Śląski — Filia w Cieszynie; J. Suchodolska: *Identyfikacja z regionem a plany młodzieży Pogranicza*. (in:) T. Lewowicki (ed.): *Społeczności młodzieżowe na Pograniczu*. Cieszyn 1995, Uniwersytet Śląski — Filia w Cieszynie Cieszyn, pp. 41—48; J. Suchodolska: *Model Europejczyka w opinii młodzieży akademickiej Cieszyna*. (in:) T. Lewowicki and B. Grabowska (eds): *Społeczności pogranicza - Wielokulturowość — Edukacja*. Cieszyn 1996, Uniwersytet Śląski — Filia w Cieszynie Cieszyn, p. 71.

¹⁵ This distinction was made by M. Jastrząb — Mrozicka. Cf. M. Jastrząb-Mrozicka: *Zjednoczenie Europy — wyobrażenia Europy — wyobrażenia młodzieży*. (in:) M. Jastrząb-Mrozicka i inni: *Tolerancja i uprzedzenia młodzieży. Raport z badań*. Warszawa 1993, Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk, p. 88.

— new requirements Europeans are going to meet in a new social situation.

The research was carried out in 1995/96 among 200 students in the third year of their studies; the students were trained to become teachers in kindergartens and in primary schools. The research data involved 172 women and 28 men¹⁶.

The united Europe — young Poles' hopes and dreams

Having examined the results of the research commissioned by the European Committee¹⁷, one may come to the conclusion that in most countries of the former Soviet Union and in most countries of central Europe (even in the Czech Republic and Hungary) interest in European integration has significantly declined¹⁸. Yet, in Poland, the recurrence of pro-European orientation is still observed¹⁹.

The above issue was referred to in one of the points of the survey. Students, in vast majority, were looking forward to integration of Poland into Europe. This attitude of support for integration was declared by 80.3% of the respondents; both of those living in Cieszyn Silesia and of those coming from other parts of Poland.

It is worth mentioning that the notion of united Europe usually meant open Europe without borders, although there were also some descriptions of united Europe as "[...] a community based on economic co-operation, which is to level the standard of living of all nations"²⁰. Along with the voices of approval of united Europe, there was also a small percentage of those who were sceptical about the process; 6.0 % of the respondents did not approve of the vision of united Europe, while few (2.7%) claimed their expectations to be dependent on the consequences the changes would bring.

¹⁶ Because of a small number of male subjects, sex was not considered an important variable. This analysis is a continuation of a part of the research published in J. Suchodolska: *Model Europejczyka w opinii młodzieży akademickiej Cieszyna*. (in:) T. Lewowicki and B. Grabowska (eds), op. cit., pp. 69—75.

¹⁷ In Poland this was done by Pentor.

¹⁸ It is also noticeable that Danish society and its political elite are critical of the idea of European Community. It results from fear of being subservient to any supranational ambitions; cf. B. Świderski: *Europa czy demokracja?* "Nowa Res Publica" 1996, No 5, p. 25. The process of the Danes becoming Europeans results in new social divisions (ibid., p. 26.).

¹⁹ Poles point to the fact that it is not only Poland which will take advantage of integration with Europe, but also Europe will benefit from the process of integration (J. Kurczewski: *Europa w drodze*. "Nowa Res Publica" 1996, No 5, p. 3.). It is predicted that "in a future referendum the opponents of the integration of Poland with Europe will constitute 5% of the voters" (ibid., p. 3.).

²⁰ The results of the analyses correspond to the data obtained by M. Jastrząb-Mrozicka. Cf. M. Jastrząb-Mrozicka, op. cit., pp. 94—95.

All the respondents showed enthusiasm for the idea of integration of Poland with Europe. This longing can be explained by the fact that students' hopes and expectations in terms of their career plans relate to united Europe. Two issues may be examined then: benefits young Poles expect to gain from the new situation and the significance integrated Europe for them.

When analysing responses concerning issues mentioned above, the following conclusions have been arrived at²¹.

The first set of questions referred to the influence, which the integrated Europe would exert on the personal lives of the surveyed²². When asked about the standard of living in the united Europe, 38% of the surveyed claimed to expect being well off. Among the people who exhibited such optimism were mainly those who clearly opted for the integration of their country with Europe. Among the subjects one could differentiate a group of realists, which constituted 40.7% of the surveyed. They claimed that the standard of living of the society would not be improved significantly, whereas 21.3% expected a radical change in Poles' standard of life, although they stated that it was impossible to define the direction in which this change would proceed. The regions the students came from did not seem to have any influence on their responses concerning the area.

Young people were also asked whether they would feel happier and more satisfied when living in united Europe, and there were considerable differences in their responses. A happier family life was expected by 63.5% of the respondents, but only 21% seemed sure of it, while 42.5% of the surveyed merely cherished the hope that such an improvement would take place. A relatively small group of subjects (7.6%) had no illusions about a happier family life after Poland had been united into Europe, while 0.3% of the respondents expressed no opinion in the matter of this issue. It is also worth mentioning, that there were subjects who did not hold any clearly defined views about this issue, and 28.6% of the respondents declared to be unable to comment. At this point it should be added that the group that wished to lead a happier family life but was not convinced about united Europe providing for it was dominated by the students coming from Cieszyn Silesia. Presumably, the reasons for the doubts derived from their individual experience of living within a community in the specific conditions of transfrontier area²³.

²¹ The questionnaire was prepared by the panel of researchers realising the project of *National identity and life plans of the inhabitants of the transfrontier regions* (Poczucie tożsamości narodowej i plany życiowe mieszkańców pogranicza).

²² The influence of Europe on private life is, in this context, understood as an influence on the standard of living and on happy family life of the subjects.

²³ Writing about a transfrontier region, the author means the Polish and Czech transfrontier region. Life in the area generates new situations, creates new challenges for the young people and poses new social demands influencing the outlook of the researched group.

Another set of questions referred to young Poles' career opportunities which united Europe could provide. The majority of the surveyed did not seem to believe in the actual availability of such opportunities for self-development; such doubts were expressed by 58.7% of the respondents. It might be of interest that the majority of the group consisted of the students from Cieszyn Silesia; they formed up to 35.5% of the surveyed. Great opportunities for starting or developing one's own career in united Europe were expected mainly by the students coming from other regions of Poland; it was as much as 25% of the total 32.6% of the respondents. There was also a group of people (8.9%) who do not believe the new opportunities will occur; they claimed that the situation would worsen.

On the basis of the above data one may draw a conclusion that students did not expect the united Europe to bestow any satisfying stability in terms of one's career.

The surveyed were also asked about the values which the process of integration should introduce into Europeans' lives²⁴. As it turned out, the subjects appreciated peace that constitutes a basis of harmonious community life as well as opportunities allowing to decide about important community actions. The greatest hopes and expectations referred to peace, meaning life without violence and conflicts (86%) and to democracy²⁵ being understood as a state providing opportunities for development of culture, politics and public life (78.2%). Furthermore, the young people expected justice and equality of opportunity to prove important for the society and its citizens (28.8%) and, although less frequently, they noted the beauty of natural environment they live in as important (10.3%).

On the basis of the answers given to the questions about the requirements of "New Europe" which would have to be met by a European one can assume that people ought to be characterised by the attitude of tolerance and openness towards others (92% of the respondents). Furthermore, the main assets of a citizen of the united Europe were a good command of foreign languages (88.7%), high IQ (82%), good education (70%) and the common sense

²⁴ The results do not give the total of 100 because it was possible for the surveyed to choose more than one answer.

²⁵ In the context of integrated Europe democracy becomes a European idea, but it is not a universal one, cf. B. Świderski, op. cit., p. 27.). Democracy can be understood as a normative invention, however, for the majority of the societies it represents objection against reality, not only in its political aspect but also in its economic effectiveness. As the research done in 1992 by M. Ziółkowski shows, democracy is perceived as a condition or synonym of wellbeing (46% of the surveyed), or is identified with freedom (18%). Cf. M. Ziółkowski: *Pragmatyzacja świadomości społeczeństwa polskiego*. "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 1994, No 4, pp. 22, 23; Cf. E. Ogrodzka-Mazur and J. Urban: *Kształtowanie postaw demokratycznych w procesie edukacji młodzieży z Pogranicza*. (in:) T. Lewowicki and B. Grabowska (eds), op. cit., p. 125.

(60.3%)²⁶. The answers concerning these issues were not dependent on the students' place of living²⁷.

According to the surveyed, with regard to their own country, the citizens of united Europe should preserve their national identity. For 80.2% of the respondents, patriotic feelings were important, both in the national and local dimensions. A considerable number of students (75%) accentuated the necessity of preserving local identity²⁸.

Preserving Poles' national identity — the condition for integration of Poland with Europe

Contemporary Europe is the area where different types of identity co-exist²⁹. More and more frequently people identify simultaneously with many different territorial and cultural entities³⁰. For many communities the notion of *European awareness* neither opposes patriotism nor threatens national identity. In that case a question can be asked whether the idea of simultaneous belonging to many cultural communities is a natural phenomenon, or it only poses a threat to a society.

Certainly, advanced forms of integration of Europe — manifested in removing borders between countries and in significant decisions made collectively by more than only one nation — will result in the traditional concept of one nation losing their meaning. However, this should not influence national

²⁶ The results of the research concerning the way in which the young people perceive Europeans are commented by A. Nobis. Cf. A. Nobis: *Być Polakiem a być Europejczykiem. Dynamika przemian struktur myślowych*. "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 1993, No 4, p. 158.

²⁷ Further comments upon the results of the research can be found in the article by J. Suchodolska: *Model Europejczyka w opinii młodzieży akademickiej Cieszyna*. op. cit.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 72.

²⁹ T. Lewowicki: *Problemy tożsamości narodowej — w poszukiwaniu sposobów uogólnionych kwestii poczucia tożsamości i zachowań z tym poczuciem związanych*. (in:) M. M. Urlińska (ed.): *Edukacja a tożsamość etniczna*. Papers from Science Conference in Rabka. Toruń. 1995, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika; Z. Boksański: *Tożsamość — Interakcje — Grupa. Tożsamość jednostki w perspektywie teorii socjologicznej*. Łódź. 1989; J. Kurczewska: *Tożsamość kulturowa jednostki i kontrowersja ideologiczna*. "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 1990, No 4; Z. Boksański: *Tożsamość jednostki*. "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 1988, No 2; Z. Boksański: *Obraz innych etnicznie a tożsamość narodowa*. "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 1995, No 4; Z. Zaborowski: *Tożsamość a świadomość człowieka*. "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 1987, No 2.

³⁰ A. Kłoskowska distinguishes between identification and identity, claiming that identification refers to the close bonds an individual is linked by with a community. Identity is more complex, as it means individual's self-knowledge, *auto-identification I*, which goes far beyond individual identifications, including also national identification. Cf. A. Kłoskowska: *Tożsamość i identyfikacja narodowa w perspektywie historycznej i psychologicznej*. "Kultura i Społeczeństwo" 1992, No 1, pp. 138—139.

awareness³¹, as some new mental and social links resulting from belonging to a larger political and cultural community are strengthened³². Consequently, it can be assumed that the process of building united Europe does not necessarily lead to a destruction of national identities which already exist. On the contrary, integrated Europe, enriched with supranational competency, may foster cultivating of national values or support perception of its society as ethnically separate communities. It can also promote a strong sense of *constitutional patriotism*³³. Besides, the ethnic identities are going to be strengthened and intensified when the Europeans start to live in a world marked by dual citizenship and dual loyalty.

These problems were reflected in the questions asked. The students were to choose the types of identity which appealed to them. The results of the analysis indicated that the students had their own vision of Europe and some expectations resulting from it. European integration, however, did not seem to jeopardize national identity and national consciousness. Within this group, as many as 83% of the respondents identified themselves as Poles. The answers concerning this issue were not dependent on the students' place of living.

Young people seeked the unity of Poland with Europe (80.3% of the students)³⁴; however, they did not feel the need to call themselves citizens of Europe. The vast majority declared attachment to their homeland, identifying themselves as Poles (83% of the surveyed)³⁵. The identity which goes far beyond any borders and is associated with being a European did not appeal to the respondents. They did not feel particularly attached to Europe or European culture. Only 0.9% of the respondents claimed to have an affinity, first of all, to European values and then to the national ones. It could also be observed that there were subjects, who were more inclined to identify themselves with the area in which they lived rather than with Europe (10.3%).

In relation to the above, one can ask a question what makes students want Europe to be united, but, at the same time, one may also claim they are cautious about it. Presumably, they are afraid of losing their Polish national identity in a united Europe. The results of individual analyses reveal that people are either

³¹ R. Dyoniziak, K. Iwanicka, A. Karwińska and Z. Pucek: *Spoleczeństwo w procesie zmian. Zarys socjologii ogólnej*. Kraków 1992, Kraków—Szczecin—Zielona Góra 1997, Zachodnie Centrum Organizacji, p. 129.

³² W. Anioł: *Ethnos i euros*. "Wiadomości Kulturalne" 1996, No 8, p. 3.

³³ J. Habermas, op. cit., p. 17.

³⁴ Similar results are presented by M. Jastrząb-Mrozicka (op. cit., p. 114), according to her research 94% of the students approve of the idea of integrated Europe. According to the research done by OBOP in October 1995, 84% of Poles look forward to the integration.

³⁵ Cf. A. Nobis: *Być Polakiem a być Europejczykiem. Dynamika przemian struktur myślowych*. quot. 159; E. Nowicka: *Polskość w świadomości młodzieży szkolnej i studenckiej*. "Przegląd Polonijny" 1993, No 1, p. 41.

incredulous about the integration process, or just they do not accept it at all. Most of them regard themselves as patriots in terms of national or local interests. Hence, the hypothesis stated during the course of the research has been confirmed: the people locally oriented are not inclined support to the concept of united Europe. Nevertheless, more open-minded people are willing to accept the process. As a result of such support, one may notice that for many young Poles the life under new social conditions in new Europe does not necessarily have to entail a loss of their national identity, but it makes this identity dual; the phenomenon of cultural polyvalence³⁶ also evolves.

The data presented let us come to the conclusion that young people of the Cieszyn region show great enthusiasm as well as cherish much hope for the participation of Poland in the united Europe. Nearly all the surveyed wanted the process to proceed, claiming that the society would witness much greater opportunities. These expectations referred mainly to a happier private life, because, the subjects expected to lead a happier family life (63.5%) and the life standard to be definitely higher (38%). The respondents also hoped that united Europe would mean greater social stability and life without violence, wars and conflicts (86%) as well as better opportunities for implementing democratic rules in everyday life (78.2%). Yet, along with the hopes, subjects voiced worries and doubts concerning the influence of Europe on their future careers. Many students were unable to predict whether their plans of future careers would be fulfilled (58.7%). The young people were also doubtful whether it was possible to preserve national identity and, what follows, the identity of societies in united Europe. The prediction as for the possible disappearance of identities is characteristic of the opponents of integration of Poland with Europe. On the whole, young Poles opt for integration, but they are not willing to lose their traditions and their cultural identity³⁷.

One may wonder about the best way of preparing young people for life in united Europe. Culture was mentioned most frequently among the answers given to this question. The necessity to rebuild European culture without destroying cultures of different nations was highlighted. To make this process feasible, educational systems should be reformed in the first place. J.M. Domenach claims that "[...] to make education open to Europe means to provide — particularly in the field of teaching languages, history and literature — a privileged place for our neighbours who also become fellow citizens of the same Europe"³⁷.

Translated by Joanna Kawulok

³⁶ The concept of polivalency is commented by A. Kłosowska; cf. A. Kłosowska, *op. cit.* (1992), No 1, p. 140.

³⁷ J. M. Domenach, *op. cit.*, p. 71.